

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE (FORMERLY WOODWORDS)

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"Safety: The "Four-Letter Word" at Time-&-One-Half" by Frank Madden

SAFETY is the time-and-one-half of all four-letter words! Four-letter words have, for some reason or another, four letters. SAFETY has six letters. Therefore, it has half again as many letters. So, six is one and one half of four!

Stay with me now. The four-letter word has always had a bad connotation. This is a professional magazine, so I will try to limit my use of four-letter words in this article. But how many four-letter words pop into your head when you think about SAFETY? How about HARD? WORK? HURT? HAND? FOOT? BACK? HEAD? Or everyone's favorite four-letter word: COST!

Put it all together and many get this notion stuck in their minds: SAFETY is a big COST that involves HARD WORK during which employees can HURT their HAND, FOOT or BACK by not using their HEAD!

On the other hand, HAPPY is a five-letter word. So is BREAK and LUNCH. We all could have happier employees if our only role was to lead them to LUNCH or provide an extra BREAK. Our success, however, is based on how well we lead our employees to WORK and how well they work within our cost guidelines. The ability to provide the customer with a product at a projected profit is what will make or break any company. That ability often hinges on how well costs are controlled.

SAFETY is a COST. Workers compensation, clinic fees, lawyers and bad morale are all part of that cost. When we install, or maintain, our safety programs, we should do it in a way that improves morale. If we are disgruntled when we install or maintain it, how well will the plant employees accept it or follow it? We need to have them be part of the PLAN and therefore part of the CURE. Safety bonuses are a great idea—hey, BONUS is a five-letter word that makes employees HAPPY!

Some companies give weekly incentives. Some give yearly incentives. From an awareness standpoint, weekly incentives are a better attention-getting, and attention-holding, device. A year is too long to wait. Our employees are just like us, they want to see results and be rewarded for it. Trussway does weekly and yearly bonuses for plant employees, a monthly bonus for supervisors and a quarterly bonus for production managers.

Trussway spent about one percent of its total hourly plant payroll on safety incentives in 1998. With a modifier of .56 we would rather pay our employees than clinics or comp carriers. One percent of payroll is a cost. A modifier of over 1.0 is also a cost. Which cost would be better for your morale? Our modifier wasn't .56 when we started our incentive program. We put in some time-and-one-half in its development, but the results were well worth it.

So put some time-and-one-half into your safety programs. It will be a cost for awhile, but after you are successful, it is FREE—the only four-letter word you'll ever need to associate with safety again!

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